

CORAL DISTRIBUTION IN THE SALT RIVER CANYON

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Purpose: Determine the gross distribution of scleractinian corals on the walls of the Salt River Canyon, and compare the coral distributions of the east and west walls.

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Accomplishments: Percentage of coral cover was tabulated for the most abundant species along with total distance photographed. A list of coral species was compiled from observations made during excursions. The east and west walls of the canyon differ markedly in percentage of coral cover; this may be due to the differences in substrate and vertical profile. The east wall exhibited a change in coral distributions which appears to be related to the change in vertical profile and substrate characteristics. The west wall was fairly uniform in coral coverage, with an increase in its outer portions due to the increased abundance of large, platelike *Agaricia* species on the deeper portions of the wall. A relatively high number of Western Atlantic hermatypic corals (at least 26) and some of the more common shallow water ahermatypic corals were found in the canyon.